

The Foundation Skills Course on the Certificate in Endodontic Practice



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Junaid qualified in 2012 and is an Associate GDP in Ashford and Sunbury. He has completed Paul Tipton's Certificate Course in Practical Restorative Dentistry, IV Sedation Training and FMC's Endodontic Masterclass and he is hoping to progress to a Masters in Restorative Dentistry. He attended the Foundation Skills Course starting in July 2014 and is currently taking the Intermediate Skills Course.

From my undergraduate years, endodontics was always a topic that brought satisfaction and at the same time frustration. Satisfaction, because the skill to be able to work blindly within dark tunnels to achieve a beautiful looking radiograph was something that was inimitable. Frustrating because trying to achieve those results time and time again was difficult if not impossible for me.

This love for the field continued after my graduation but inherent frustrations remained. Despite reading around the topic, investing in a fancy new endo motor and being a consumer junkie for the advertising material on show, I was not happy with the results that I was achieving. I was close to admitting defeat, having spent thousands on equipment. I was willing to accept that those beautiful radiographs were limited to the specialists or those who had received close mentoring in an appropriate clinical environment.

There is only so much you can learn from sitting in a classroom and watching a lecture. As clinicians, it is the applications of those skills particularly in endodontics, which help us provide the best possible treatments for our patients. I had heard of courses that did not have much of a practical component, but that was not what I wanted. For me to achieve the results that I wanted I needed to first develop my competence with practical skills which in turn would provide the predictable results and subsequent confidence in my ability. When the EndoAcademy opened its doors to generalists I was among the first cohort of delegates to start at the academy. The courses had been designed to allow for small group teaching with over the shoulder supervision. This was something that immediately drew me to the course.

The course is split into three modules. The first module is described as 'Get It Right First Time' which is in essence a foundation course dealing with primary root canal treatment. Modules 2 and 3 are intermediate and advanced courses respectively. These courses follow on from the teachings of the foundation course and eventually lead to certification as part of a year long program. Attendance to the course is usually on a once a month basis. This was useful as it allowed the skills learnt to be implemented in practice without having too much time off work.

I have now completed the first module of 4 days and can only therefore comment on that. The sessions would take place at Richard's practice at 99 Harley Street. It's a beautiful location and as you walk in you can see that you are in the right place offering a bespoke service in Endodontics and teaching of endodontic skills. Each unit within the learning facility

is equipped with a surgical microscope and Richard's first focus was for us to get acquainted with these microscopes as quickly as possible. Initially, this was quite frustrating as there is a steep learning curve but once you get to grips with it, it becomes an invaluable tool in endodontics.

Each session would begin with a brief lecture followed by a series of tasks that would dictate the practical teaching for the day. The days were organised to allow us to progress through the various steps involved with a typical primary root canal treatment. Day 1 focused mainly on access preparation, canal location and negotiation. Day 2 and 3 concentrated on shaping and cleaning of root canals. Day 4 was dedicated to obturation. The course allowed us to use a variety of rotary/reciprocating systems as well as a range of obturation methods. We were able to criticise first hand the different systems and techniques without any vested interests towards a particular system. We were able to understand why set protocols needed to be followed when carrying out treatment and how to ensure success time and time again.

The afternoons involved us watching Richard via video link as he treated a patient in his surgery. The whole patient journey was followed from consultation to treatment. We were able to ask questions via the audio link attachment to his headphones. We were allowed to carry on with our work but sometimes I remember the group became so engrossed at what Richard was doing that they would put their work on hold. There was always plenty of time to catch up.

All work was done on either extracted teeth or the Academy Molar. The academy molar is a unique teaching tool as every student had the same academy molar- a CAD/CAM designed acrylic tooth with replication of normal morphology. Richard was therefore able to standardize the teaching and provide us with direct feedback with any part of the preparation protocol. Errors such as ledges, perforations, over preparation can all be recognized with this teaching method and corrective measures taken to prevent this problem from happening again. For example, Richard knew the size of the apices of the academy molar so we were also assessed on our ability to maintain this size without any damage to the apical constriction. In other words, it's a great way to learn and a way to compare your level of proficiency with those of your peers.

Since we were a small group of 8 with 2 supervisors (Richard and Irene), there was ample opportunity to pick their brains and ask as many questions as we wanted. If there was something that we forgot to ask during the day or if we had any problems in clinical practice, Richard had set up an online discussion board for us to voice our opinions. This online support was great at allowing us to discuss cases, post pictures, radiographs and serving as a resource for all the course material. Richard has made this available for all students even after they leave the academy, which I think is a great gesture to allow continued learning.

The course for me has been everything that I wanted and more. Richard's unique ability to communicate difficult concepts into everyday English as well as his wonderful sense of humour all helped to make the course enjoyable, relaxed and easy to digest. There are a few people that I recommend as excellent teachers who go out of their way for their students and Richard is one of them. His patience and humility were two traits that I admired and something that we as students could benefit from. I would strongly recommend this course for anyone looking to improve their endodontic skills at whatever level of clinical practice they maybe. I'm sure there will be something that you can take back into your day jobs and tips that can save you time and money with improvements in clinical outcomes.